

3/4/11

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Dr. Debra Brown. I am the pediatrician at Riverview Hospital for Children and Youth in Middletown, CT. I am speaking to the committee today on behalf of Connecticut's children who are currently placed out-of-state in group homes, residential facilities and inpatient psychiatric hospitals. Currently, there are nearly 360 children residing in facilities located in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Florida to name a few. I am aware that every quarter approximately 30-40 children are admitted to out-of-state in-patient psychiatric hospital beds.

A child by virtue of her dependence on adults cannot be treated in isolation - it is the entire family that needs to be incorporated into a treatment plan for successful intervention of any condition for that child whether it is an ear infection, diabetes, or a psychiatric or behavioral problem. At Riverview, there is counseling for the child, the family, and the child and family. The goal of discharging a patient home with her family is paramount, and discharge planning revolves around this, arranging for all necessary services to help the plan to succeed.

However, for many reasons, a significant number of children cannot return home. It is fair to say that better than 50% of children discharged from Riverview Hospital

are sent out-of-state because there are NO PRIVATELY RUN FACILITIES in the state of Connecticut who will take our children - even after they have been stabilized after their hospitalization at Riverview.

As a taxpayer of Connecticut, I am outraged that tens of millions of dollars are spent on these placements every year AND that these monies are leaving the state.

As an advocate for children, especially for the most vulnerable of Connecticut's children, I cannot tolerate the abuse inflicted on by the state by removing them from their family, friends, community and support systems.

As an employee of the Department of Children and Family I applaud Commissioner Katz's effort to bring as many children back to Connecticut as quickly as possible. I would urge the legislature to support those efforts as well.

At this time, any child who is out-of-state and requires INPATIENT PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALIZATION could be transferred to Riverview Hospital. Riverview staff, hospital administration and the Department are looking for ways to develop programming - both in the short term and the long term - to help meet the inpatient and residential needs of children who have been sent out-of-state. We would like to be an active part of the process to bring these children back and to bring them back soon.